

Swetland Store
Wyoming, Pennsylvania.
1890-1900

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Reduced Copies of Measured Drawings

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Ralph W. Lear, District Officer.
311-312 Dime Bank Building
Wilkes-Barre, Penna.

STETLAND STORE
WYOMING, LUZERNE COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

Custodian

Pettebone Estate.

Date of Erection

Approximately, 1815.

Present Condition

Fair. Unoccupied, therefore, no attempt is being made to preserve it. Very little departure from the original state. No improvements, few additions.

Number of Stories

Two and one-half stories.

Materials of Construction

Frame, exterior walls, wood siding.
Stone foundations, floors of white pine wood. Interior walls, wood and plaster.
Original slate roof.

SWETLAND STORE

Wyoming, Luzerne County, Pennsylvania

William Swetland, builder and owner of the Swetland Store, located in Wyoming, Luzerne County, Pennsylvania, was born in Sharon, Connecticut, in 1789. His grandfather was Luke Swetland, one of the first settlers in Wyoming Valley, locating on the farm where William later resided.

Luke Swetland's story of his capture by the Indians and his months of hardship with them, is most absorbing. To retrace his weary days of captivity would be but a repetition of ever-recurring sorrows.

William Swetland was one of the first merchants in upper Kingston. He came with his grandfather, Luke Swetland, and his father, Belding Swetland, when they returned to Pennsylvania, in 1800, about twenty-two years after Luke Swetland had been carried away by the Indians. In 1812, he left his father's farm and became a clerk in the store of Ezra Hoyt, in Kingston. In 1815, he opened his own store on the road leading from Kingston to Wyoming. He was a commissioner of Luzerne County and was elected to the Constitutional Convention, 1838 to revise the Constitution for Pennsylvania. He became President of the Lackawanna and Bloomsburg R.R. Company; and also was President of a bank and postmaster in 1826, and was otherwise actively connected with other corporations besides his own large private business.

On July 4, 1815, Elias Hoyt and William Swetland announced that "they have opened a new store on the main road in the upper part of Kingston." This was the Swetland Store still standing near the Pettebone Estate, and directly across the street from the old Swetland Homestead, which Luke Swetland the grandfather, began, Belding Swetland, the father, added to, and William Swetland, the son, finished. On February 24 1818, this partnership was dissolved, the business being continued by Mr. Swetland. Under date of February 6, 1822, it was announced in the Susquehanna Democrat as follows: "New store by Ziba Smith and Co., composed of Ziba Smith and William Swetland, at New Troy" (this was the original name of Kingston) Mr. Swetland was running his store in 1825, and in partnership with Payne Pettebone, continued it for many years. The store was extended and enlarged from time to time.

The store is in much the same condition now as it was then, in that there are no improvements, few additions, and little renovation. It is a wooden building, with stone foundations and very simple architecture, two and one-half stories high, with floors of white pine wood. The interior was of wood and plaster, but in most cases of wood. The slate roof is also in its original state, but has been somewhat patched. When the building was erected the street level was eight feet above the present grade. The building has been quite neglected with apparently little thought being given to its future historic value.

The following is a description of a store typical of that period and almost identical with that of William Swetland's. It would indeed, be a curiosity shop in this day.

At the right, as you enter the front door, your eye rests on a shelf on which stands wooden clocks, varying in size from two to three feet in height, very gay pictures are on the lower half of the glass doors. In the winter, on the floor was a huge pile of buffalo robes and a few buffalo skin over-coats. A few steps farther, stood a large barrel of potash; (the families made soft soap for washing clothes and cleaning purposes) behind the barrel came long counters, which extended on either side, the full length of the room, and on one of these stood two pairs of scales and a large cheese. One was used for weighing sugar, butter, cheese, raisins, crackers, herring, mackerel, and pork. The other for weighing potash. Behind the counters, and under them, were large food bins, which contained white sugar, brown sugar, crackers, coffee, and flour. On the shelves above, and behind the counters, was small hardware neatly arranged; and on a shelf directly over the door going to the back room was the Bible Depository. There were large, deep drawers under the shelves. Now, we will go back, entering the front door, looking to the left, first comes the office, and next to that the large vault. Right near the office door comes rows of shelves on which was the Sunday School Depository.

Then, comes shelves enclosed by glass doors, in which first, was all colors of sewing silks, in skeins, then lovely little silk shawls, silk pocket handkerchiefs,

stockings, neckties, garters, ribbons, and fine swiss muslins. Then came long rows of shelves with Merino's of many colors, muslindelsins, (very much worn in those days) Flannels, Gingham, Calicos, Checks, and Tickings. Then, came all kinds of white goods. Under the counters, were batts of cotton, boxes of zephyr, large balls of twine, boxes of shoes, clothes lines, and piles of paper bags, which were hand-made, as there were none to buy in those days. In the rear of the store, was the storage room where Hogsheads of sugar and molasses and long racks of iron kegs of nails, rakes, shovels, hoes, pitchforks and other tools were kept. These racks were made of the handles of shovels and pitchforks. There was another smaller store room at the right of the store, proper, which would contain great quantities of salt, directly beyond this, was a paint room, where all manner of paint was kept. In the back of the large front store was a railing leading to the cellar, (this cellar was later made into small apartments.) To the left of the store, entering from the front door, and next to the vault are three small rooms which are probably later additions.

On the second floor, was another large store room containing many bins, and in the rear, another empty storage room which probably held things not often in demand, or possibly large pieces of merchandise. There were, as you see, many store rooms probably because merchandise was bought only twice a year, in the Spring and Fall.

There is an interesting Augur, probably one of the original instruments used in the store, which was found in the store, used to bore down through the barrels of white sugar. At that time, the sugar was not granulated as we have it now, but was much the same as brown sugar, and when it became too hard, the augur was used to break it up.

An old hand truck was also found on the premises. This is original. One other interesting article found was an old oil lamp, with the inscription, "Dietz, #3, Globe, tubular". This formerly hung on a post outside of the building.

Such was the store which William Swetland had; a perfect example of the architecture of that period and of much historical interest in the Valley, which hails William Swetland as having been one of the finest, most generous and best loved men in this Community.

Historic Material found in "Harvey's History of Wyoming Valley".

Partial Description of Former Appearance of Store, obtained from a historical description written by: Mary C. Gildersleeve.

Author.....*Betty Tol Mossing*
Approved.....*Ralph W. Lear*
Date.....*June 15, 1936*.....

Reviewed July 31 '36, TWC